

Soviets Announce Mongolia Troop Pullout

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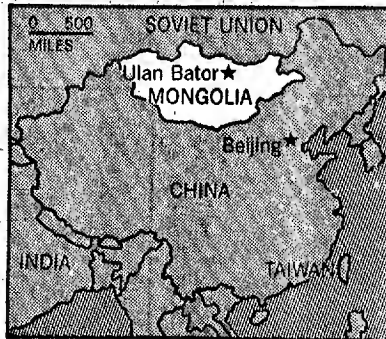
Reuter

MOSCOW, March 7—The Soviet Union said today it is withdrawing 75 percent of its troops from Mongolia in an apparent concession to China on the eve of May's Chinese-Soviet summit.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov said the cut was in addition to an announcement by Mongolia this week that it would reduce its armed forces by 13,000 and trim its military budget by 11 percent.

"In agreement with the Mongolian government we are bringing back to the motherland three-quarters of Soviet troops based there," Gerasimov said at a news conference. "All airborne detachments will be withdrawn and disbanded."

Gerasimov did not detail the total number of Soviet soldiers in Mon-



golia, although recent Western estimates put the figure at about 50,000, grouped into four divisions.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev promised in a speech to the United Nations in December to bring home a "major part" of Soviet troops from Mongolia, without giving more details, as part of far-

reaching unilateral troop cuts in Europe and Asia.

Western experts saw the move as a concession to China, which has long urged the withdrawal of all Moscow's forces from Mongolia, a sparsely populated area as big as the whole of Western Europe sandwiched between the two communist giants.

The troops were sent to Mongolia at the request of its Soviet-backed government in 1966 at a time when once-close Sino-Soviet relations had been soured by ideological and foreign policy disputes.

Amid signs of an improvement in these ties, the Soviet Union announced in 1987 that it was pulling out some of the troops. Western experts said 8,000 to 11,000 soldiers were withdrawn.